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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, July 18, 2008

Eden Prairie woman sentenced to 72 months in prison for defrauding Medica out of more than \$1.7 million

A 45-year-old Eden Prairie woman was sentenced yesterday in federal court to 72 months in prison for defrauding Medica out of more than \$1.7 million in a health care fraud and money laundering conspiracy. United States District Court Judge Joan Ericksen also sentenced Indadeeq Omar July 17 in Minneapolis to three years supervised release following her term of imprisonment.

Last December a jury found Omar guilty of one count of health care fraud conspiracy, 12 counts of health care fraud, one count of money laundering conspiracy, 19 counts of concealment money laundering, and seven counts of promotion money laundering. She was indicted on March 13, 2007, in connection with the conspiracy against Medica, a health care benefit program.

"Health care fraud is an emphasis area for the Internal Revenue Service," said Francine L. Evans, Special Agent in Charge of the IRS-Criminal Investigation Division's St. Paul Field Office. "Money gained through illegal sources, such as health care fraud, is part of the untaxed, underground economy. To combat health care fraud, the IRS provides financial investigative expertise to multi-agency task forces to follow the money trail from the crime to the culprit."

Omar conducted the conspiracy starting Jan. 1, 2001, through December 2004. The object of the conspiracy was to fraudulently obtain money from Medica by submitting claims for translation services that had not been rendered to Medica members.

Omar owned and operated Global Interpreter Corp., which contracted with Medica to provide translation services to members who required such services when being treated by health care providers. Omar received member information and dates of medical visits from a Medica employee, so that they could submit false claims that corresponded with dates on which members had actual medical visits.

When Medica began to question Omar about the number of claims, she refused to provide back up documentation supporting the claims.

Omar engaged in financial transactions designed to promote the health care fraud scheme, and conceal and disguise the nature and source of the illegally obtained health care fraud proceeds. Omar prepared Global checks listing fictitious interpreters as payees, and negotiated a number of checks and deposited the cash into bank accounts she controlled in her name, the names of her children and under the business name. The funds were transferred between accounts, and eventually used to purchase various assets.

Omar's husband, Mohamed Essa, 51, Eden Prairie, was also indicted on March 13, 2007, in connection with the conspiracy. He had fled the U.S. and was apprehended on April 10, 2008, in South Africa. He faces charges of one count of health care fraud conspiracy, 12 counts of health care fraud, one count of money laundering conspiracy, 19 counts of concealment money laundering and seven counts of promotion money laundering.

A third defendant involved in the conspiracy, Tou Chaiker Vang, 39, Maplewood, was sentenced April 11, 2008, to one year and one day in prison, three years of supervised release, and was ordered to assist Omar in paying more than \$1.7 million in restitution. Vang pleaded guilty to one count of money laundering conspiracy and one count of health care fraud conspiracy. Vang was employed by Medica in the State Public Programs customer service department. He testified against Omar at her trial.

"The crime of health care fraud is a growing concern and remains a priority of this office," said Acting U.S. Attorney Frank J. Magill. "We will continue to aggressively prosecute these crimes and thank our law enforcement partners for their efforts."

This case was the result of an investigation by the IRS-Criminal Investigation Division and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Office of Inspector General, with the assistance of the Medica Special Investigations Unit. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John R. Marti and William J. Otteson.